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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001838

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: EAST JERUSALEM HOME DEMOLITIONS RESUME

REF: A. JERUSALEM 1217
[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 965

Classified By: Consul General Daniel Rubinstein,
per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. On October 12, Israeli officials demolished a Palestinian-owned house and dismantled several other structures in the Beit Hanina area of East Jerusalem. The demolitions were the first to take place inside the Jerusalem municipality in nearly three months. PLO official Saeb Erekat condemned the demolitions, which he said "highlight the real source of growing tensions across the city." According to Jerusalem City Council member Meir Margalit, the Municipality's 2009 budget for home demolitions will allow for an additional 40 demolitions before the end of the year. End Summary.

MUNICIPALITY RESUMES DEMOLITIONS IN EAST JERUSALEM

[1](#)2. (C) On the morning of October 12, Israeli officials demolished a Palestinian-owned home in Al Marwaha and dismantled two structures in Ashkaryia (both neighborhoods are located in the northern East Jerusalem area of Beit Hanina). UN OCHA and local media report that the Al Marwaha property belonged to Amjad al-Taleiqi, who five months ago converted a stable into a small three-room residential structure, in which he lived with his wife and three children. Prior to the demolition, al-Taleiqi received several eviction warnings from Israeli Border Police. On October 13, Jerusalem Municipality officials showed PolOff a demolition order summary, which cited the al-Taleiqi property for being built on open public land. According to the summary, the property was surveyed in February 2008 by the Municipality's Department of Building Monitoring, and its demolition was approved by the Municipality in May 2008. The summary notes that earlier requests to delay the demolition were rejected by the court.

[1](#)3. (C) According to UN OCHA and the Municipality, the two additional structures demolished on October 12 were an uninhabited tin storage unit and a 30-square-meter concrete building foundation. (The Municipality also shared with PolOff the demolition order summaries for these properties.) In addition, a demolition was initiated and then halted on the foundation of an apartment building under construction in Beit Hanina; this last demolition was postponed for up to 45 days following a court order and a 40,000 NIS payment, in order to provide the owners a final opportunity to obtain legal permits.

DEMOLITIONS END THREE-MONTH LULL

[1](#)4. (C) The October 12 demolitions were the first to take place in Jerusalem in nearly three months. In an October 9 conversation, Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat's special assistant

Stephan Miller told PolOff that Israeli police generally do not conduct demolitions during Ramadan for security reasons. Margalit predicted in late September that demolitions would resume following the end of the Jewish high holidays in early October. According to Miller, the Jerusalem Mayor's office plays a limited role in deciding the timing of home demolitions inside municipal borders, despite the fact that the majority of demolitions are executed under violations of the Municipality's building regime. "There are thousands of properties on the demolition list, and the Mayor's office is not always aware of pending demolitions," Miller said.

RESUMPTION OF DEMOLITIONS ATTRACTS CRITICISM

15. (U) On October 13, senior PLO official Saeb Erekat released a public statement criticizing the demolitions, which he said "reinforce why negotiations without any tangible change in Israel's policies on the ground offer Palestinians no hope of peace." Referring to what he termed "Israel's escalation of tensions in Jerusalem," Erekat said, "this relentless assault on Palestinian life and Palestinian property in East Jerusalem is part and parcel of Israel's illegal settlement enterprise, and its determination to continue expanding and building settlements in direct violation of international law and existing agreements."

16. (C) On October 12, UNSCO Political Counselor Robert Dann told DepPolChief that, in an October 8 meeting between UNSCO Special Coordinator Robert Serry and Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon, Serry said that new home demolitions in East Jerusalem would be unhelpful in the current political

JERUSALEM 00001838 002 OF 002

climate. According to Dann, Ayalon seemed to agree and responded that no East Jerusalem home demolitions were planned in the near future. Dann noted that UNSCO was therefore "less than impressed" when it heard on October 12 that Israeli police had conducted demolitions in Beit Hanina earlier that morning.

INCREASED DEMOLITIONS LIKELY IN THE COMING MONTHS

17. (C) According to Margalit and Municipal official Elad Halevy, 48 home demolitions took place in Jerusalem in 2009 prior to the events of October 12 -- ten of which were "self demolitions" undertaken by owners seeking to avoid being charged for the cost of an official demolition. Margalit told PolOff that the Municipality's 2009 budget for home demolitions, which he estimated at about \$1 million USD, will allow for approximately 40 additional home demolitions in 2009. Margalit believed that most remaining 2009 demolitions would occur in the Old City, Silwan, and Sheikh Jarrah, and noted that most homes demolished to date have been near settlements or main access roads leading to settlements.

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